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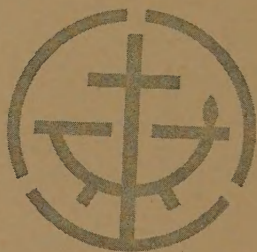
J. H. JOWETT

M.A., D.D.

A CHARACTER STUDY

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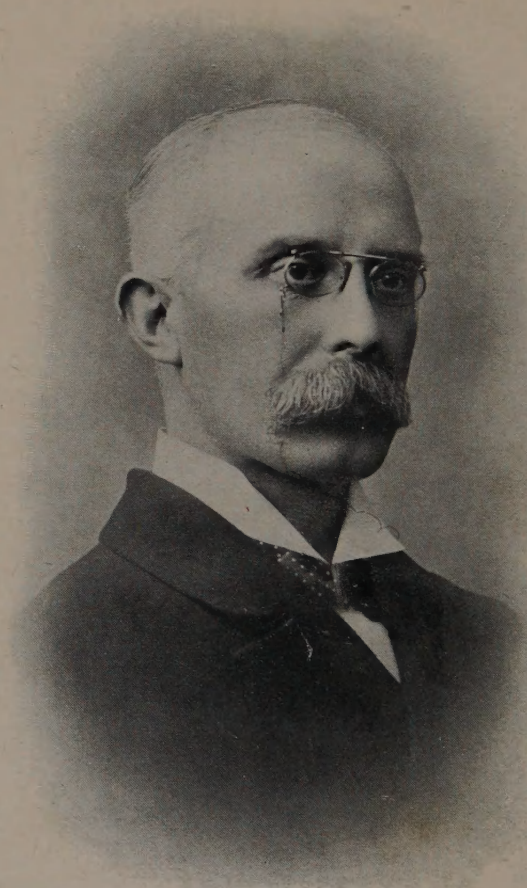
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J. H. JOWETT

M.A., D.D.

A Character Study

BY

FRANK MORISON

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—A REMARKABLE SUCCESSION - -	5
II.—FROM ST. JAMES', NEWCASTLE, TO CARRS LANE - - - -	16
III.—THE WIDER MINISTRY - - -	23
IV.—DR. JOWETT AS A STYLIST - -	34
V.—SOME IMPRESSIONS - - - -	41
VI.—SOCIAL PROBLEMS - - - -	52
VII.—THE CALL TO FIFTH AVENUE CHURCH, NEW YORK - - - -	61

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J. H. JOWETT, M.A., D.D.

CHAPTER I

A REMARKABLE SUCCESSION

DR. JOWETT is fond of relating how, during a holiday some years ago, he visited a little village chapel on the north coast. With the characteristic courtesy of humble folk the villagers found him a seat unsuspecting his ministerial profession. As the time for the commencement of the service approached there was some confusion owing to the preacher not having arrived. A hurried consultation was held, and it was finally decided to ask the visitor if he thought he could conduct the service for them. Modestly replying that "he would try" Dr. Jowett ascended the pulpit. No doubt he preached one of the sermons which have been listened to with interest by crowded congregations at Birmingham, but, he says, his little audience were quite unmoved. Not a single indication could he perceive that he had awakened any response in their

J. H. Jowett

minds and hearts. Some few days later it became known that "Mr. Jowett, of Carrs Lane," was staying in the district, and he was astonished to receive a deputation from the tiny chapel in which he had preached only a few days previously. "Oh," he said, in reply to a pressing invitation to again occupy their pulpit, "but I conducted your service only the other Sunday." "Yes," was the reply, "but we didn't know who you were, sir, then!"

Whether Dr. Jowett's audience were quite so unresponsive to his eloquence as he would have us believe, one may be, perhaps, permitted to indulge a doubt, but the story serves to illustrate the wide influence which, for three generations, the historic pulpit at Carrs Lane has exercised throughout the length and breadth of English Nonconformity.

It is not often that any single Church can claim such a remarkable succession of preachers as have ministered at Carrs Lane for just over one hundred years. Amid the enthusiasm aroused by the modern forward movement in social affairs, Nonconformity stands in some danger of forgetting how much, as a Christian community, it owes to Dr. Jowett's two great predecessors: John Angell James and Dr. Dale. Between

A Remarkable Succession

them these two remarkable men held the pulpit at Carrs Lane for upwards of ninety years, covering the most active social and intellectual periods of the nineteenth century. Both were men of conspicuous ability ; both were dominated by the highest personal and civic ideals ; both in their turn exercised wide influence, not merely in their own town but in the larger sphere of contemporary English thought. At the risk, therefore, of extending this little volume somewhat beyond the limits originally intended, I shall venture to devote a preliminary chapter to a brief review of their influence upon religious thought.

It is a little more than a century since, on a certain Saturday evening in August, a young man of some nineteen summers alighted from the Bristol coach in the main thoroughfare of a busy inland town. He was a theological student from the little Hampshire town of Gosport, and had come to spend the recess by occupying the vacant pulpit of a local Nonconformist Church. As the coach drew up at the door of the inn he was accosted by an elderly but kindly man, who greeted him, though a perfect stranger, with every mark of affection and respect. The town was Birmingham in the early nineteenth century ; the kindly stranger, one

J. H. Jowett

of the deacons of Carrs Lane Chapel ; the young student, John Angell James. It was the humble beginning of a wonderful ministry destined to be peculiarly rich in spiritual influence.

It would hardly be possible to discuss Mr. James's religious teaching without some reference to the intellectual and political atmosphere prevailing in the day in which he lived. He entered upon his ministry at Carrs Lane in May, 1806—just six months prior to the famous decree of Berlin. For fifteen years the world had been witnessing the progress of an unprecedented social upheaval. The revolutionary doctrines preached by Rousseau a quarter of a century before had already commenced to bear fruit, and the long dormant spirit of democracy, casting away its age-long trammels, had asserted with unexpected force its newly-discovered power. The loss of the British colonies across the seas had served to indicate the direction of the current. But the warning had either been disregarded or heeded too late, and the stream, tossing madly on into a torrent, had culminated in the vortex of the French Revolution. The entire social order of a nation seemed about to sink into the whirlpool of a blind and resistless anarchy. The flight of Louis to Varennes ; the establish-

A Remarkable Succession

ment of the Paris Commune ; the administrative chaos of the " Terror," and the rise of Napoleon to the place of power—all these events had followed in bewildering succession, to culminate in a period of disastrous war memorable indeed in European history.

It was, perhaps, inevitable, that in an age of sensations such as these, the thoughts of men should have turned from abstract theological controversy to the deeper significance of political movements. The voice of criticism was, for the moment, hushed before the stupendous conflict of social forces. There were other causes, however, not directly connected with the Revolution, but bound up with the development of scientific thought. The book of the older criticism was closed ; that of the new was as yet unopened. The great period of the English Deists had practically terminated with the death of Hume ; that of the new historical critics was yet to arise with Baur and Strauss. With the exceptions of the socialistic writings of Robert Owen and Paine's *Age of Reason* (published in 1794), it was to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and the poetical writings of Byron and Shelley that Englishmen were learning to look for the literature of unfaith. It was essentially a

J. H. Jowett

transitional period, a lull before the storm of that later intellectual conflict to which more critical methods and the new scientific generalization were to give rise. Of the men who were to figure in that later drama but a few had found their way into the world. Carlyle had just gone to the grammar school at Annan; John Stuart Mill was in the cradle; Comte was wandering, a mere child, among the vineyards of Hérault. Three years were to elapse before Darwin, the Copernicus of the new era, would appear upon the scene, while his two great contemporaries, Huxley and Herbert Spencer, were not to enter until more than a decade, and in the latter case, nearly two decades later.

It was in this period of political stress and storm that Mr. James accomplished much of his best work. His writings became immensely popular, not only in this country, but throughout the English-speaking world. His *Anxious Enquirer*, upon which his fame chiefly rests, achieved a circulation of over a million copies; being rivalled only in its own department of literature by that of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Many years later, writing of this little book in his autobiography, Mr. James inserted the following passage: "In this country it has reached more than half a million and in America to perhaps a

A Remarkable Succession

greater number. In one of the back settlements of America, where no minister had ever settled, an individual had a copy of the work and it was lent from one to another, and it awakened so general a solicitude about salvation that twenty-seven persons dated their conversion from the perusal of that solitary book."

Nor is it very difficult to trace the cause of this unprecedented popularity of a purely devotional book. It lay in one fact, which was indeed the secret of all Mr. James' wonderful power and influence. *He preserved the emphasis of eternity.* He judged everything by its relation to the perspective of an enduring futurity. Immortality was to him the most certain of all realities; the dominating thought of his entire life. It overshadowed every other consideration, and gave to his work that sense of responsibility which distinguished it. As the idea developed in his mind salvation became the supreme practical necessity of life, a transaction fraught with eternal moment to perishing humanity. He engaged in the work of salvage with something of the desperate earnestness of a lifeboatman putting out to a wreck. He counted all things but loss that he might rescue some needy souls from the perilous waters of this

J. H. Jowett

mortal life to the firm rock of immortality beyond.

Mr. James was succeeded in the pulpit at Carrs Lane by his brilliant co-pastor, Robert William Dale. The difference in character between these two remarkable men is so great as to lead one to marvel at the spiritual kinship which enabled them to work together for so long with scarcely a cloud upon their ministry. It speaks much for their broad tolerance, for their mutual affection, and their intense enthusiasm in the cause of Christ. Their difference was, perhaps, rather one of intellectual outlook than of temperament. Mr. James's theology was simplicity itself. It might be justly summarized in the title of one of his most popular tracts, *Believe and be Saved!* He accepted the particular form of Christian doctrine which had come down to him almost without question. He believed in it implicitly himself, and he yearned with an intense earnestness to turn men from what he believed to be the certainty of moral death to the glorious possibility of a higher and eternal life.

Dr. Dale, on the other hand, had early felt the distracting influence of doubt. While quite a young student at Spring Hill it became rumoured that he was in danger of drifting into scepticism. The news reached

A Remarkable Succession

the ears of Mr. James, and Dale has left on record how, in a long and earnest conversation at his own house, the veteran preacher had sought to turn him from a perilous path. Although Dr. Dale's writings never enjoyed the enormous popularity of his predecessor's, he was in many respects the greater and more influential man, inasmuch as his teaching was formative in an age of much intellectual doubt and irresolution.

Dale stood in the very forefront of the intellectual conflict. When the so-called "higher criticism" seemed to be sweeping everything before it, his vigorous mind was grappling at first hand with the new problems in an independent spirit. He went fearlessly to the foundations and having refreshed and re-inforced his own faith he sought to pass on his experience to others. His *Living Christ and the Four Gospels* was a masterly presentation of his own personal analysis of the historical evidences of Christianity, coupled with an appeal to experience as a necessary factor in any final and decisive judgment. To many this book has been a continuous source of inspiration and delight; although, in the competent opinion of Dr. Fairbairn, his *Atonement* was his most reasoned contribution to theology.

Dale was, in a very real sense, the child of

J. H. Jowett

his day. He loved and gloried in it, and yet his personality towered above the merely trivial in the controversies in which he engaged. His broad outlook and lofty ideals, together with a certain massiveness of intellect lent dignity to all his work. He touched life at many points and wherever he touched it his influence was felt. His enthusiasm overflowed from the religious into the political world. He was a force to be reckoned with in a day resplendent with historic names. So great was his influence in Birmingham, when Mr. Chamberlain was first returned as the parliamentary representative of the borough, that a London newspaper twitted the new member on being returned as "the representative of Mr. Dale." "If that be so," was Mr. Chamberlain's generous response, "there is not a member of the House of Commons who will have a better, wiser or nobler constituency."

Such were the two men who, for the greater part of the nineteenth century, ministered to the spiritual needs of a great city congregation, and exercised no uncertain influence upon the religious and social life of their time. The link was sundered as the century was drawing to its close. There were signs in the autumn of 1894 that Dr. Dale was passing through a period of physical trial.

A Remarkable Succession

He preached but intermittently during the opening weeks of 1895. As the spring approached the weakness became more apparent, although his splendid intellect remained unclouded until the end. In March it became clear that the great preacher was passing to his rest. The end came on the evening of the 13th, and for the first time for upwards of ninety years the Church found itself without a pastor.

With that deep spiritual insight which had marked her decisions in the great crises of her history, she was content to await with patience and discernment the leader appointed of the Lord. When he at length appeared, he came from that busy industrial community which has grown up around the great shipyards of the Tyne.

CHAPTER II

FROM ST. JAMES', NEWCASTLE, TO CARRS LANE

It was on October 6th, 1895, that there came to the historic pulpit at Carrs Lane, a young north-countryman, who in six brief years had established a reputation in the north of England as a preacher of singular promise and growing power. He had gone to St. James's, Newcastle, fresh from college, and at the time that the call came to the larger ministry at Carrs Lane was thirty-one years of age.

It was a call which might well have daunted a young man less gifted with moral insight and spiritual power. The Carrs Lane pastorate, rendered memorable by the saintly John Angell James, had been lifted to a position of even greater influence by Dr. Dale. The halo of tradition gathered round a pulpit which had been the centre of such high teaching for so many years. But like all worthy tradition, it inspired more than it



INTERIOR OF CARRS LANE CHAPEL, BIRMINGHAM.

Newcastle to Carrs Lane

awed. In his first sermon as minister of Carrs Lane, Dr. Jowett said :

I stand to day in the line of an illustrious succession. I have to take up the work of a man who moved with rare and reverent intimacy among the greatest truths of the Christian religion. This pulpit has never been belittled by the petty treatment of small and vulgar themes. The familiarities of the pulpit here have been sublimed. . . . I feel my poverty most when I remember the purity and the altitude of spirit which gave possibility to his profound spiritual discernment. To be able to enter as he did into the burning bliss of the eternal light required a consecrated and thrice-purified soul. But then it is my joy and my encouragement to know that I serve the same King, the same resources of grace are open to me, the same Holy Spirit of Christ is pledged to sanctify me and to lead me into the light of truth. I believe I have the same sympathy of a loyal and warm-hearted people. On these I shall lean, and with these I dare to face the labours of to-morrow with a quiet and trustful courage.

The sense of his great spiritual heritage did not diminish as time went by. Thirteen years later, upon the occasion of the opening of Digbeth Institute, he took the opportunity of acknowledging in generous terms the debt which his own ministry owes to that of Dr. Dale. Writing in *The Christian World*, he declared :—

I have never stinted my testimony to the marvellous greatness of that ministry, and there is no one in broad England more qualified to bear the witness.

When I first came to Carrs Lane my one fear gathered about the Church's traditions. I knew that the Church had been great for one hundred years, and I wondered whether its traditions would fit

J. H. Jowett

me like an easy and familiar garment, or whether they would bind me like a coat of mail. Should I inherit multitudinous rules or liberalizing principles? I am now in my thirteenth year, and most gladly do I testify that I inherited a magnificent spiritual deposit, a vast reservoir of spiritual energy, which was at my disposal for my own appointed work. Whatever else Dr. Dale did, he was instrumental in forming a Church with a gloriously free spirit; a Church which, while it reveres its noble traditions, has never been fettered nor embarrassed by them.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that the career of the new pastor should have been watched with unusual interest; not less by those who were jealous for the Church, than by the discerning few who saw in Dr. Jowett one of the future leaders of the denomination. "Do not expect another Dr. Dale," was his plea at the meeting of welcome held immediately after his removal to Birmingham. The Church did not get another Dr. Dale, but it speedily found that its young minister was not only maintaining its high traditions, but was actually creating new ones. The building became too small to hold the audiences which crowded to hear him, and the services were temporarily removed to the Town Hall, while the accommodation was increased. The membership steadily went up. Without sensation of any kind, without a word which might even remotely be connected with party politics, Dr. Jowett

Newcastle to Carrs Lane

made the pulpit of Dr. Dale the centre of a deep spiritual uplifting. His influence began to be felt, first in the civic, then in the national life. Upon great occasions, both in his own denomination and in the wider circle of the Free Churches, men turned to him to express what was deepest in their minds and hearts. To-day his name is familiar throughout the English speaking world as one of the indisputably great preachers of our own generation.

It is interesting to look back over the early formative years of Dr. Jowett's career. He was born at Halifax on August 25th, 1864. The intuition that he was destined for the Christian ministry seems early to have laid its compelling grip upon his mind, but it was not until he was seventeen years of age that he took the definite decision to enter the ministry. In this decision he was influenced by the late Dr. Mellor, of the Square Congregational Chapel, Halifax, for whose character and abilities he had a boundless admiration. Dr. Jowett has thus put on record his sense of obligation to his old pastor :—

He was just the kind of man to excite a spirit of hero worship in young men ; a man of magnificent personal appearance ; a consummate orator, fearless in his onslaught upon any prevalent evil. Two sermons he preached on the introduction of racing

J. H. Jowett

into Halifax still stand out prominently in my mind. His ministry, characterized by deep interest in young people, was one of the earliest and strongest influences in my life.¹

Through the instrumentality of Dr. Mellor, having received his early education at Hipperholme Grammar School, he was sent by the Square Congregational Church to Airedale College, which at that time was under the presidency of Dr. Fairbairn. Winning the "Brown" Scholarship within a year, he proceeded to Edinburgh University, where he studied for four years, taking his Arts degree in 1887. It was here he came under the influence of Masson, Calderwood and Henry Drummond. Of the last he has spoken more than once in terms of affectionate remembrance:

I laboured with him in the early days of his work among the Edinburgh students. He manifestly sweetened the atmosphere of the University and introduced a deeper and more serious moral tone. I was deeply interested in his simple unaffected manly addresses. He rarely dealt with intellectual difficulties, but he fearlessly handled the bald practical problems and temptations of a young man's life. Many and many a time Drummond sent me home to my knees.²

Returning for another year to Airedale, Dr. Jowett concluded his theological training at Mansfield College, Oxford, under

^{1,2} The writer is here indebted to an interesting interview with Dr. Jowett, published sixteen years ago in *The Christian Commonwealth*.

Newcastle to Carrs Lane

the discerning guidance of his old tutor, Dr. Fairbairn.

During this period he received the invitation of St. James's Church, Newcastle-on-Tyne, to become their pastor. The charge was accepted on condition that he should be permitted to complete his theological studies. The Church readily assented, and in October, 1889, fifteen months later, the young Halifax student commenced his ministry.

During the six years that followed Dr. Jowett had abundant opportunities of developing his knowledge of the needs of a city Church. He brought unbounded enthusiasm to the work and succeeded in doubling his Church's membership. Social and spiritual enterprises alike felt the quickening influence of his personality. He acquired, also, that wonderful capacity for speaking to children which is one of the surprises of those who only know his doctrinal discourses. The entire Sunday morning service was devoted every six weeks to the children, a precedent which might be followed with advantage in many churches.

Notwithstanding the wide distance separating Dr. Jowett's sphere of activity from Birmingham, his abilities had not escaped the watchful eye of Dr. Dale, who shortly before his death addressed a letter to him

J. H. Jowett

urging him to accept a call to a certain Midland pastorate. The act was prophetic, though its fulfilment was destined to be strangely linked with the termination of Dale's own splendid ministry. When at length the end came, somewhat unexpectedly, and the great teacher followed his predecessor into the shadows, the Church turned, as though by instinct, to the young preacher of the north.

To the unanimous invitation of the Church and congregation to become their pastor, Dr. Jowett, after a period of quiet deliberation, made the following characteristic reply :

I have sought to consider the matter with a quiet and serious judgment. I have prayed to be delivered from all temptations arising from the mere glamour of the influential position to which you call me. I have tried, by God's help, to allay every unworthy ambition as well as every unworthy fear, and to wait, with calm and expectant mind, the voice of duty. I believe that voice has spoken, and in obedience to it I beg now to intimate my acceptance of the call.

CHAPTER III

THE WIDER MINISTRY

OF the varied aspects of Dr. Jowett's work during his fifteen years' pastorate at Carrs Lane, it would be difficult to write within the slender limits of this book. It has been a pastorate fraught with rich meaning and a deep spiritual significance—not only for the famous Church itself, but for the wider circle of the Free Churches. Set in the heart of a great industrial and political community, Carrs Lane has ever been one of the great thought centres and spiritual rallying places of Nonconformity. Men have looked to her pulpit for leading and inspiration in times of political change and theological unrest. Yet it is not too much to say that in fifteen-and-a-half years Dr. Jowett has extended its influence into new and hitherto untrodden fields of fruitfulness and service.

Looking back upon those fifteen years, one is increasingly impressed by the influence which Dr. Jowett has exerted upon the civic

J. H. Jowett

and public life of Birmingham. It is the more remarkable because its growth has been unconscious and almost imperceptible. He has never sought to stand prominently before his fellow citizens or voice his opinion in the public press. By the sheer force of example his lofty ideals of citizenship, his keen sense of civic honour, and the spirit of broad toleration which has enabled him to co-operate with men of widely different faith, have permeated far beyond the immediate circle of his communion, and have made for permanent enrichment of public life.

A singular detachment has characterized his attitude towards the civic and political controversies of the day. To many men the temptation would have been irresistible to have followed more closely in the steps of one who had exercised such unmistakable influence upon the political thinking of the city. But Dr. Jowett had the courage of his great gifts. He saw that his true mission lay in other fields, and he resolutely refused to be drawn into anything which might impair his efficiency or usefulness in his chosen work.

Even on those rare occasions, when he has been drawn, somewhat unwillingly, into public controversy, his utterances have been marked by a fine chivalrous feeling for the

The Wider Ministry

susceptibilities of his opponents. During a memorable School Board election about ten years ago, he crossed swords with no less redoubtable a controversialist than the Bishop of Manchester. He did so in a speech from which hardened electioneers, who remembered the titanic struggles of the past, went home feeling that the spirit of high oratory which had moved in Dawson, Bright and Dale had spoken yet again with its old authoritative voice.

Two years later the Bishop and Dr. Jowett were destined to meet under the most happy circumstances. It was upon the occasion of the farewell banquet to Mr. Chamberlain (before his visit to South Africa), to which Dr. Jowett was invited. In relating the incident he described how "some laughter-loving and ingenious spirit had arranged upon the platform a table for two, upon which the cards bore the names of the Bishop and himself." Amid laughter, he added: "I do not remember that we glared at one another, or menaced one another, because neither had anything to be ashamed of in public controversy."

A comparatively little known incident will serve to illustrate the fact that Dr. Jowett has not hesitated to take the unpopular course, when that course seemed to be

J. H. Jowett

dictated by the highest motives. It occurred during the dark days of the Boer war. in connection with what came to be known as the Lloyd-George riot. Mr. Lloyd-George, then a rising member of the Opposition, had made in the heat of political controversy certain statements about the British Forces in South Africa, which had aroused considerable resentment. Birmingham reservists had taken a foremost place among the great cities of the kingdom in volunteering for active service, and were therefore calculated to be a little sensitive upon the point. In an ill-judged moment, the Secretary of the local Liberal Association invited Mr. Lloyd-George to address a meeting in the Town Hall. Rightly or wrongly, a great number of people regarded the proposed visit as an affront to the city's loyalty, and to its distinguished representative. A still larger number of citizens, including so pronounced a Liberal as Dr. Jowett, regarded it as ill-timed. Public feeling ran high. A vast crowd, numbering from fifty to a hundred thousand persons, gathered in Victoria Square. As frequently happens, a small but relatively powerful disorderly element emerged, and had things pretty well their own way. Notice-boards were torn down and broken into jagged-edged instru-

The Wider Ministry

ments of offence. Some ugly charges were made, and finally missiles began to be thrown towards the lofty windows of the historic hall. In the space of half-an-hour scarcely a whole pane of glass remained in the eastern frontage of the building.

That Dr. Jowett felt strongly the civic stigma of these proceedings is revealed by the fact that he broke through his habitual reserve and addressed a long letter to the Editor of *The Birmingham Daily Post*, in which the following sentences occurred :

I very sincerely protest against the attitude assumed by a portion of the Birmingham press to the meeting of last night. Personally I cannot acquit you and one of your contemporaries of grave responsibility in the resultant disorder and riot. . . . If you have deliberately purposed to incite the populace to disorder and violence, I think your columns could not have contained more appropriate matter.

These were daring words, and it speaks much for the respect with which Dr. Jowett was held, that the Editor of the *Post* made so courteous and temperate a reply.

The incident, once over, was forgotten on both sides. In justice to a great provincial daily, with a long and distinguished tradition, it may be cordially acknowledged that *The Birmingham Post* continued to extend to Dr. Jowett the hospitality of its columns whenever he sought to avail himself of them,

J. H. Jowett

and it has always given the fullest reports of meetings in which he was concerned. It is, however, the spirit which incidents of this kind reveal—the spirit which when it fights, fights with clean weapons, leaving behind no poisonous or festering wounds, that those who know Dr. Jowett intimately have in mind when they speak of his having sweetened the civic and political life of his time.

While Dr. Jowett has thus stood aloof from everything which might tend to alienate him from his high purposes, he has been working steadily to achieve a closer union between the various sections of the Christian Communion. Few men have been on more cordial terms of respect and friendship with members of other denominations than has Dr. Jowett. He has counted three successive rectors of Birmingham as his personal friends, while the fact of his association with Dr. Gore for the closer union of the Churches is one of the most significant and hopeful signs among the religious tendencies of our time.

The creation in 1905 of the new Bishopric of Birmingham, and the enthronement of Dr. Gore as the first Bishop of the diocese, gave to Dr. Jowett an opportunity of showing his sympathy towards the mem-

The Wider Ministry

bers of the Established Church in the city. On the evening of the enthronement ceremony a meeting of recognition was held in the Town Hall, welcoming Dr. Gore to the city. Dr. Jowett was invited to speak as the representative of Nonconformity.

The task was rendered easier by the fact that Dr. Gore, in the afternoon ceremony, had referred to Dr. Dale in terms of fine appreciation as "the man who to him seemed to represent ideally the combination of the Christian prophet with the Christian citizen." Dr. Jowett gladly accepted the invitation, and in a happy speech welcomed Dr. Gore to the city as "a tremendous addition to the social forces which were working for the common good."

The rendering even of this simple courtesy was not without its difficulties. There was some stirring among those rigid enthusiasts who, in their zeal for the evangel of Christ, do somehow fail to shadow forth in a broadening sympathy His teaching and character. Dr. Jowett, however, persisted in his determination, and in doing so had behind him the unmistakable support of his own people.

It has been well remarked that Dr. Jowett, as a preacher, is a national rather than a denominational possession. His wider

J. H. Jowett

ministry, throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain, in which he has had the loyal support of his own people, has known nothing of the narrowing limitations of an exclusive sectarianism. He has given of his best alike to each section of the Free Churches. Within the space of four years Dr. Jowett has occupied the two highest offices to which a Congregationalist can aspire. He became Chairman of the Congregational Union in 1906, while his period of office as President of the Free Church Council (1910-11) terminates just prior to his removal to America. The essential simplicity of the man was revealed when he was elected in 1905 to the Chairmanship of the Congregational Union. He was away from Carrs Lane on the Sunday after the announcement was made public, and the deacons seized the opportunity of passing a resolution of congratulation. Replying upon the following Sunday, Dr. Jowett referred in a few brief sentences to the high dignity to which he had been called, closing upon an unusually personal note. In a voice which revealed the depth of his feeling he spoke of the pleasure which the appointment had given to his aged parents at Halifax, "in that honour had been done to their son at a time when they had been passing

Wider Ministry

through a period of the most tempestuous trial." It was a kindly and filial note, and drew from his congregation a ready and sympathetic response.

It is, perhaps, too early as yet to attempt an estimate of Dr. Jowett's influence upon the religious tendencies of our time. Possibly it will be said of him, as it has been said of Matthew Arnold, that his greatest contribution was not to the thought but to the temper of his age. One thing, however, may be stated with absolute certainty—he has given us a new revelation of the possibilities of the preacher's art.

At a time when critics upon all hands have been deploring the declining power of the modern pulpit, Dr. Jowett has been drawing vast audiences in England and America by a series of sermons and addresses sustained with an astonishing degree of spiritual and imaginative power. It is in the technique of his art that he possesses such certain and unfailing mastery. Many a young preacher who has envied his facility of thought and expression in the pulpit, fails to realize how largely it is due to careful and even laborious preparation. And yet this deliberate premeditation never obtrudes itself upon the consciousness of his hearers. He brings into the pulpit a manuscript which

J. H. Jowett

he places upon the desk in front of him when he rises to announce his text. In five minutes you have forgotten that it exists. You may marvel at the literary grace, at the unfailing flow of fertile and suggestive thought, at epigram tripping upon epigram, and at the rich background of imagery which softens the whole discourse into a thing of unity. But few realize that behind the apparently easy rhetoric there lies the genius of a severe and ordered mental discipline. Not the least of the many good things which Dr. Jowett owes us in the future is a book to students upon this very question of the speaker's art.

And yet, interesting as these things are, they are secondary. It is to the deeper and spiritual message of the man that one turns to estimate what it is that he has been doing during these twenty-one years that he has laboured amongst us. It has been given to few men to catch so early the ear of serious men in all denominations. He has done so by reason of the lofty purity of his ideals, and the fact that he has stood apart from the political controversies of the day. Like all true seers, he is a "great disregarder of the unessential." He stands pre-eminently for the eternal principle that if you look after the big things the little things will



Photo]

[Whitlock & Sons.

MRS. J. H. JOWETT.

The Wider Ministry

look after themselves. He refuses to be drawn into petty and irrelevant issues.

To these high gifts of thought and speech, Dr. Jowett adds the saving grace of a deep personal humility. Perhaps the truest and justest thing which could be said of him is that he is always preaching to himself. He never stands apart from the frailties of our common humanity. His prayers are all "general confessions."

It is in these solemn moments of intercession that he rises into the supreme fulness and realization of his power. The true preacher is always revealed by the manner of his approach into the Unseen Presence. The greatest literature of all the ages has remained unwritten because it has been addressed in the high moments of aspiration to Him, who seeing and hearing all, Himself speaketh not and is invisible.

CHAPTER IV

DR. JOWETT AS A STYLIST

DR. JOWETT belongs to a little group of contemporary preachers who may be said to have sprung into general recognition while still comparatively young men. Even so long ago as 1889, when he left Mansfield College, Oxford, to take up his work in Newcastle, he was regarded as a young preacher of exceptional promise. In the twenty-one years which have followed he has laid the foundations of a ministry which will probably be unique in the history of English Congregationalism. The Church which he is leaving at Carrs Lane numbers over 1,200 members, compared with 900 at the death of Dr. Dale. He preaches regularly to overflowing congregations. There is something almost inexplicable in the fascination which draws these crowded audiences to hear this grey-haired young man expound the spiritual philosophy of life. You miss the external note of oratorical power usually associated with large gatherings. There is nothing in

Dr. Jowett as a Stylist

the manner of the grand port, no highly sustained periods of dramatic power—nothing but an atmosphere of quiet interest as the speaker unfolds his thought which deepens into stillness as he reaches the point to which he has been leading up. Some of his most impressive passages are delivered almost in an undertone which, however, he contrives to make audible throughout the entire building. It is then, apparently, that he has the greatest command of his own thought.

Next to the deep spirituality of his teaching, Dr. Jowett owes his reputation in the religious world to-day almost entirely to the possession of two qualities. In the first place he is a stylist in preaching—and that of a high order ; and, secondly, the distinctive emphasis of his teaching is of a practical rather than a theological character. I have placed the quality of style first because it is undoubtedly the characteristic which first awakens the interest of the hearer. Even upon the uncritical the subtle influence of style is not wholly lost. The ability to present an argument with lucidity and grace, to describe a mental picture with precision and just that touch of emotion necessary to make it live in the minds of the hearers, is the haunting dream of all whose business it is to clothe their thoughts in spoken word.

J. H. Jowett

In the pulpit, as in literature, "style" is a valuable asset, and it is as a stylist that Dr. Jowett stands almost alone among the preachers of the day. You cannot listen to him for ten minutes without being impressed with the degree of perfection to which he has brought what one might call the external mechanism of spoken thought. He brings into the pulpit a written manuscript, but he contrives to recite it with all the appearance of spontaneity and the air of a man telling a new tale.

Dr. Jowett's style is peculiar, in that it combines a highly cultivated literary form with the apparent ease of spontaneous thought. He contrives to introduce much of the grace of literary prose into the more unwilling vehicle of public speech. This is a rare accomplishment, and the man who has once achieved it need never fear an empty church. Men will follow the speaker with the gift of eloquence, not for the sake of his message,—that is often secondary—but for the exquisite joy of hearing their own language as it should be spoken.

To his power of literary and graceful speech Dr. Jowett must always owe much of his popularity as a preacher. There are, no doubt, many in every congregation who have acquired the habit of looking beneath the

Dr. Jowett as a Stylist

literary vestment to those deeper qualities from which the real charm of preaching springs. There are, doubtless, many who have found in Dr. Jowett's quiet simplicity of faith something of moral strength in these days of theological unrest. Others are attracted by his lofty ideals, and the mystic spirituality of the man which even his studied grace of style cannot wholly obscure. But to these Dr. Jowett would still be Dr. Jowett were he a far less brilliant preacher than he is. To the many the attraction is in the purely external mechanism of his art. The soft and modulated voice ; the wealth of illustration, both in thought and gesture ; the novel and colloquial treatment ; the frequent epigram ; the rapid flow of succinct and highly compressed thought—these are the qualities which go to make up the subtle thing we call " style." To a preacher they constitute at once his strength and his weakness. His strength, because of the enormous power they place in his hands. His weakness, because of the knowledge which can never be long absent from his mind that people will flock to hear him not so much for what he will say to them as for the way in which he will say it.

Dr. Jowett's style does not consist so much in the substance of his sermons as in the

J. H. Jowett

manner of their delivery. Not a little of his wonderful influence over his congregations is due to the almost hypnotic effect of his personality while preaching. He has a kind of psychological power of thought projection which creates an atmosphere congenial to him. You soon discover that his personality is even more eloquent than his voice. There is a fascination in his manner which enlists your interest even though your judgment pronounce against him. It is this quality which is missed by those who only know him through his printed books. A sentence written of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, might with equal justice be applied to Jowett: "No speech that he has ever made reads quite so well as it was spoken. The rich musical voice, the erect form, the classic face, the simplicity and candour which are the outstanding characteristics of the man, cannot be transferred to paper, and without these his speeches are mere shadows of their actual performance." No one who has heard Dr. Jowett preach in his own pulpit at Carrs Lane, and then read the self-same sermon in cold print the next morning, but has felt that it has ceased to be the living vital thing which appealed to him but a few hours before.

Dr. Jowett's style is not by any means the

Dr. Jowett as a Stylist

simple gift it may appear. The apparent ease in the pulpit is the result of long continued and laborious study. He leaves nothing to chance. In important passages every word is studied and carefully selected for its appropriate use. His sermons are written in full, and delivered substantially in the same terms. "I feel that for me," he once said, "writing a sermon is absolutely necessary to exactness of thought and expression." Thus his utterances abound in literary artifices which would be quite impossible to extemporaneous speech. Robert Louis Stevenson, himself a master of literary style, was once asked what was the secret of good literature. His reply was: "Elbow grease." "I can always tell," he said, "when an author does not write over and over again. The most rapid writer cannot arrange the mass of material which goes to make up a book, without having it out of order here and there; order is the basis, the charm, and the end of literature." In the same sense, Dr. Jowett believes that, as far as the style is concerned, order is the basis, the charm, and the end of preaching. His sermons are nothing if not logical. He is most at home when unfolding some ordered sequence of thought, and he appeals confidently and with dignity to the reasoned

J. H. Jowett

judgment of men. He delights to take some great ruling principle of life, drawn frequently from an obscure text, and then to conduct his hearers on an imaginary tour of inspection, revealing the principle at work in the varied departments of science, philosophy and life. It is like being taken through a large works. Having inspected the principal in the private office, his hearers are taken, as it were, through a succession of workshops where the same guiding principle is revealed operating in each. "Now let me take you a step further," is a favourite expression. This means a further call upon the imagination, and away you go to the basements and engine-rooms, until a glance at the clock reminds him of external things, and he reluctantly releases you with a promise of further departments to be visited on another day.

CHAPTER V

SOME IMPRESSIONS

It is sometimes difficult to add the finer touches to a literary portrait without abandoning the formal procedure of discussion and stepping back, as it were, into the softening atmosphere of personal impression. Even the most straightforward types of character rarely fit the critical niche which is found for them. There is almost invariably left that outstanding indefinable something which defies analysis, and which yet adds sufficient distinction to place the character in a category of its own. Especially is this the case where the powers under consideration are of an imaginative quality. I shall, therefore, attempt in the present chapter, without reference to that order which, according to Stevenson, is "the charm and the end of literature," to set down a few stray impressions of Dr. Jowett as they have occurred to one who has, perhaps, heard him preach with sufficient frequency to form a judgment.

J. H. Jowett

The attempts which have been made to define Dr. Jowett's position in contemporary preaching have been remarkable for their frequent failure to catch the quiet simplicity of manner which is the keynote of all his preaching. Writers to the press have, almost without exception, agreed in assigning to him qualities which his own people at Carrs Lane would probably be the last to claim for him. As an example the following passage may be quoted from a cleverly written series of character studies, entitled, *The Man in the Pulpit*.¹ Referring to Dr. Jowett the author proceeds as follows :—

After a while I capture his central trait. He has the eyes of a wild mystic, far-piercing, swift, undeviating, with a light in them that flames and flashes as if each flung glance buried itself in the very heart of reality. Behind these eyes the soul of the man is visibly at work, with fiery fury, hurling all its passions and yearnings and dreams into the molten volley of eloquence that rushes from his burning mouth.

The writer seems to have pictured Dr. Jowett as a vehement and not very attractive Voice crying aloud in a wilderness of moral desolation ; a kind of modern Amos ; one of those rugged and uncompromising figures which occasionally sweep into our social and political systems like some fiery portent of impending evil. Anything more unlike the

¹ By James Douglas.

Some Impressions

quiet conversational manner in which Dr. Jowett ordinarily engages his congregation it would be difficult to imagine. It is quite true that Dr. Jowett frequently rises in moments of inspiration to a considerable level of rhetorical power, but the declamatory mood is uncongenial, and he soon recovers the brilliant half-conversational manner of which he is such a perfect master. That he possesses many of the qualities of the mystic, I, for one, should not be prepared to deny. But his is rather the contemplative mysticism of the schools than the wild half-fanatical denunciation of the desert.

Dr. Jowett excels in what John Morley in a fine phrase calls "the imaginative treatment of the common-place." His mind is a veritable storehouse of illustration and metaphor, drawn chiefly from the broad ways of nature. He delights in the homely illustration, and the triumph is that he makes it convey so much. If you walk with him along a country lane his eye is quick to detect the hidden mysteries of the countryside, but even quicker is his imagination to discern the analogy between the material happening and his own deeper philosophy of the soul. It is this broad sympathy with nature in her simpler moods and his remarkable gift of expressing his thoughts in a

J. H. Jowett

highly picturesque form which have contributed so largely to his popularity among all classes of the religious community.

In one respect Dr. Jowett's style is a return to simplicity, a protest against the artificiality of dogmatic theology. There is an important analogy between the laws of progress in the mental and the spiritual worlds. Both find their earlier sources of strength in the imaginative faculty. Intellectually we commence in the nursery with the dear old picture books, in which the giraffe, the wind-mill and the railway engine vie with one another for our affection and respect. From this we pass to a higher period of mental discipline when we learn uninteresting arithmetical tables and struggle with pot-hooks. Later we arrive at the assimilation of truth in the abstract, from which lofty eminence we look down with some amusement and contempt upon our earlier weakness.

It is not otherwise in that higher intellectual region which Dr. Jowett terms the "realm of the spirit." The deepest truths come to men most readily in a pictorial form. The imagination can grasp with certainty what the undisciplined mind cannot, from sheer inexpertness, lay hold of at all. Thus, when a professor from the colleges discourses to an average congregation upon theological

Some Impressions

truth in the abstract, they esteem him dry and unintelligible. It is like teaching trigonometry and the differential calculus to the infant class. Dr. Jowett meets their case by combining something of the subtlety of the theologian with the simplest and most elemental forms of expression. He carries his hearers back to the picture book and nursery stage of their spiritual experience. He contrives to teach them much the same lesson as his more academic friend, but he accomplishes it by interesting them in the pictures and leaving them to imbibe the truth which they represent.

I have referred in an earlier page to Dr. Jowett's connection with the late Professor Henry Drummond, under whose influence he fell while studying at Edinburgh. If there is one thing in which he may be said to be carrying on the work of his old teacher, it is in the direction of what Drummond himself used to describe as "spiritual diagnosis."

The preachers of the day may be divided roughly into three classes, represented by three well-known and easily distinguished types. There is the dogmatic theologian, engaged in the frontal attack on unfaith in its intellectual capacity ; there is the religious politician, conducting a kind of guerilla

J. H. Jowett

warfare against the social enemy ; and there is the spiritual physician who follows with the main body, and undertakes the much needed task of tending the wounded for the other two. It is to this last class that Dr. Jowett unquestionably belongs. If I may be pardoned a somewhat daring but not inappropriate metaphor, I would say that he is the Florence Nightingale of the Nonconformist Church militant. He feels but little drawn to the long-range artillery with which a scientific theology seeks to reduce the citadel of a rampant unbelief. He is far too sensitive and highly strung to engage in the rough and tumble of the political skirmish. But he loves to wander among the defeated and disabled in Christ's army, cheering with a word here, consoling with a promise there, now bringing word of a new victory at a particular point, now inspiring enthusiasm and hope by confident prediction of ultimate triumph.

Dr. Jowett brings to the task many of the qualifications of the physician. To begin with, he is an incurable optimist. The note of pessimism is incompatible with his outlook on life, still less with the gospel which he preaches. Even if the nature of his subject occasionally leads him to dwell upon the sombre reality of facts, it is only that he may

Some Impressions

brandish aloft amid the darkness which he has created the glowing torch of hope. He contrives to see bright edges to the darkest and most forbidding clouds. His recently published little book, entitled *The Silver Lining*, is a study in eclipses—a "First Aid to the Spiritually Wounded," an "Enquire Within" upon everything concerning the disaffections of the soul.

But Dr. Jowett is not merely an optimist ; he accomplishes the further task of interesting men in the remedy he is proposing to apply, and thus calls in their volitionary powers as conscious helpers in their own recovery. I remember hearing of a man who, throughout a serious illness, evinced such a scientific interest in his symptoms that his medical man permitted him to record his own temperature three times a day, and keep a record of the same extending over a period of three weeks. His recovery was not a little due to the healthy stimulus of mental interest. Dr. Jowett does something analogous to this in the spiritual realm. In other words he makes a practice of preaching the elementary psychology of the heart, in order that his hearers may understand something of the mysterious laws by which their moral recovery is to be brought about. It is in these periods of analysis that Dr.

J. H. Jowett

Jowett rises to the fulness of his powers. He is never quite so interesting and convincing as when he deliberately commits himself to a piece of lucid and consistent reasoning.

Probably Dr. Jowett himself hardly realizes the extent to which he relies upon his ability to create an artificial atmosphere congenial to his peculiar mode of thought. This he accomplishes almost unconsciously, though he frequently assists it by a preliminary challenge to the imagination of his audience. For this he is indebted to that brilliant flow of imagery of which his mind seems to be a perfectly inexhaustible reservoir. Take as an example the following description of an Arab fleeing to a desert tent¹:

This is a desert scene. A hot, panting fugitive is fleeing for his life, pursued and hunted by the forces of a fierce revenge. His crime is placarded on his garments; the marks of blood are upon him. In a moment of passion, or in cool deliberateness, he has maimed and outraged his brother. And now fear has spurred him to flight. Nemesis is upon his track. He takes to the desert! The wild, inhospitable waste stretches before him in shadowless immensity. No bush offers him a secret shelter; no rock offers him a safe defence. He can almost feel the hot breath of his pursuers in the rear. Whither shall he turn? His terrified eyes search the horizon, and in the cloudy distance he discerns the dim outlines of a desert-tent. His excited nerves play like whips

¹ *The Silver Lining*, p. 83.



DIGBETH INSTITUTE, BIRMINGHAM.

Some Impressions

about his muscles, and with terrific strain he makes for the promised rest. The way is long! The enemy is near! The air is feverish! The night is falling! The runner is faint! Spurring himself anew and flinging all his wasting resources into the flight with the pursuers even at his heels, he stretches out towards the mark, and with one last tremendous exertion he touches the tent rope and is safe. He is now the guest of the desert man, and the guest is inviolable. All the hallowed sanctions of hospitality gather about him in his defence. He is taken into the tent, food is placed before him, while his evaded pursuers stand frowningly at the door. The fugitive is at rest! Such is the undimmed glory of Arab hospitality.

Considered as part of a spoken utterance, this passage is a masterpiece of vivid and graphic description. The short, terse sentences, the almost complete absence of apparent effort, the condensation, yet withal the trembling vitality of the passage, reveal the true art of narration and make you suffer in sympathy with the pursued. This passage, coming as it does at the very commencement of a sermon, accomplishes the two-fold object of introducing the subject and establishing vital contact between the speaker's rapidly moving thought and the imaginations of his hearers. From that moment he has his audience in his grip. The rest is merely a question of sustained interest.

The opening paragraph of "Light all the Way"¹ is a good example of Dr. Jowett's

¹ *The Silver Lining*, p. 69.

J. H. Jowett

power of word painting, with its wonderful suggestion of tranquility—the quiet softness of breaking dawn merging into the heightening splendours of the sunrise seen from some lonely and commanding height.

An interesting example of how Dr. Jowett will sometimes take a central thought and present it again and again, as it were, under varying angles of illumination, the little discourse entitled “Our Brilliant Moments”¹ might be suitably chosen. The preacher has been wandering recently along a winding hilly road on a dark and stormy night. An intense darkness hides the distance from his view, and even the nearest objects loom weirdly out of the obscurity. Suddenly the clouds part, the moon sweeps into the rift, and in a flood of light the road stands out like a white ribbon across the hill and the whole countryside emerges into view. The rift closes. The darkness again reigns supreme. But the traveller has taken his bearings and can proceed with assured tread. From this simple illustration he proceeds to enunciate the principle of believing in the moment of inspiration. “While ye have light, believe in the light,” and the idea is successfully worked out in its individual and national relationships.

¹ *The Silver Lining*, p. 75.

Some Impressions

Dr. Jowett's prayers are perhaps, the most beautiful of all his public utterances. Here he abandons all the artifices of gesture and expression which mark his sermons and speaks with the simplicity which becomes the approach of human weakness into the Eternal Presence. When you have once heard this grey-haired young man, humbly yet with conscious dignity, supplicating on behalf of erring men before the invisible throne of grace, you have gained a new vision of the poetry of English speech and a new consciousness of the majesty of things unseen.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

No study of Dr. Jowett's work would be complete without some reference to the great social experiment which, three years ago, was inaugurated in the slums of Birmingham. On Thursday, January 16th, 1908, Mrs. Jowett declared the new Digbeth Institute open to the public, and in doing so realized one of the greatest dreams of her husband's life. For years—indeed, ever since he went to Birmingham—Dr. Jowett had cherished the hope of founding in one of the darkest parts of the city a great social Institute which should be a centre of healthy influence in the dreary and unillumined life of the slums. In imagination he saw a spacious and highly-equipped social club, springing out of the very heart of darkest Birmingham and throwing its doors wide open to the sons and daughters of poverty and misfortune. It was to be a club founded on broad and generous lines. Handsome, well built and equipped, every legitimate and healthy

Social Problems

recreation was to be encouraged within its walls. It was to meet at once the physical, mental and spiritual needs of a poverty-stricken district.

With this great ideal before him, Dr. Jowett set to work. He first appealed to his own Church and congregation at Carrs Lane, and in a memorable sermon declared that a Church so richly blessed in the past should take some practical means of showing its gratitude. He then proceeded to outline the scheme which he described as "the dream of his life."

The response more than justified Dr. Jowett's confidence. Upwards of £10,000 was contributed by the Church and congregation, many of whom are said to belong to the working class.

Having thus secured the generous support of his own people, Dr. Jowett felt himself justified in appealing throughout the denomination, and indeed beyond it, for funds to carry out the work. It meant many weary months of ceaseless effort. But Dr. Jowett's optimism was equal to all emergencies. His own splendid enthusiasm for the cause became infectious, and triumphed in a hundred different directions over many difficulties.

From the first it was Dr. Jowett's wish

J. H. Jowett

to open the Institute entirely free from debt. An offer by Mr. W. P. Hartley, of Liverpool, to give the last £1,000 on condition that the entire amount was raised before the opening of the Institute gave an added stimulus ; and Mrs. Jowett was able to announce at the inaugural ceremony that the entire capital sum of £25,000 had been subscribed.

It is not proposed to review here the arguments in favour of the institutional Church as a means of meeting the social needs of large industrial centres. There is, unfortunately, no escaping the fact that, pride ourselves as we will upon our commercial and industrial progress, these very things have brought with them problems which were unknown to our more primitive forefathers. The American may point with pride to his steel "sky scrapers," towering aloft for twenty-seven or thirty storeys ; the Londoner to his public improvement, his journalism and his means of transit ; and even your Birmingham citizen to his municipal progress and world-wide commercial development. But the price which mankind has paid for its civilization has too often to be measured in the broken lives of thousands of their fellow men and women. The slums of the Bowery, of Whitechapel, and of Digbeth, cry aloud in eloquent condemnation of the

Social Problems

social system of which they are the direct and inevitable consequence.

We may well pause before the social forces which have transformed the once beautiful neighbourhood of Deritend, with its murmuring brook, its wayside hostel, and its broad meadows stretching away to the wooded park near St. Martin's Church, into the so-called Floodgate Street area, with its desolation of human rookeries and its appalling waste of human possibility. When in 1538 John Leland passed through Digbeth on his famous itinerary of Britain, he described it as "as pretty a street or ever I entred." To-day it is a dreary wilderness of dingy streets, from which narrow and insanitary courts lead to so-called tenements, many of which are hardly fit for human habitation.

It is a saddening thing to wander around this district and reflect upon what it might have been under a wiser and saner dispensation. It is a week-day afternoon in January. The sun is shining with difficulty through the pall of smoke and soot hanging over the great railway viaduct which stretches across the landscape. It has been raining recently. The roads are thick with black mud, and little groups of ill-clothed, half-starved children are playing in blissful ignorance of

J. H. Jowett

the physical and moral perils by which they are surrounded. The streets, often narrow and tortuous, are lined on both sides by rows of dilapidated dwellings, which, however, frequently reveal a faint aspiration towards respectability—a solitary flower pot in the window, a not too dirty curtain, a doorstep bearing trace of a recent effort to set a good example amid discouraging surroundings. These signs mark the aristocrats of the district. It is only a few of these slum dwellers who can afford the luxury of a house or even a room facing the public street. The great proportion are herded together in dismally overcrowded tenements reached by courts and alleys, the walls of which often threaten to fall in ruins at your feet. On all sides there are the same signs of dilapidation and decay, the same starved, pinched faces, the same cold look of resignation, and above the grim, gaunt railway arches looming in silent immensity against a leaden sky.

Into this district Dr. Jowett and his workers have sought to bring the brightening influence of a first-class, highly-equipped club. Need we wonder that its success has been instantaneous, and that the men and women of the district have crowded in to spend a brief hour in the light and warmth

Social Problems

and companionship which it affords. In point of equipment it is perhaps as perfect as human ingenuity could devise. There is a spacious hall, capable of accommodating 1,480 people; a billiard room, with three full-sized tables; a reading room; games rooms for men and youths; a café (open at all times to the public); a large and well-equipped gymnasium; school rooms; rooms for Trades Union and other meetings; and a wood chopping yard for temporary assistance in cases of genuine unemployment. Amid this wealth of material, a score of different agencies are in operation.

On Sunday work is started by a vigorous Adult School, at which 180 men presented themselves on the opening Sunday. In the afternoon a Brotherhood meets, of which Rev. W. Jones (the superintendent of the Mission, who has had much experience in Manchester and Sunderland) is president. Addresses are given by prominent speakers. On the opening Sunday, when Dr. Jowett himself took the chair, close on 1,000 men occupied the large hall. The usual religious services are held morning and evening.

During the week all the clubs are in full swing. Billiards are indulged in on payment of a weekly subscription of a penny and an extra charge of three-half-pence for twenty

J. H. Jowett

minutes. Chess, draughts and dominoes are, as usual, great favourites. The fine gymnasium is in nightly use, alternately for men and women. On the opening of the gymnasium with a display by the Y.M.C.A. team, no less than 500 people, drawn from the poorest class of the district, paid one penny for admission.

Mrs. Jowett's great meeting for women, which was for so long a Monday evening feature in Carr's Lane, meets at Digbeth, and has grown from 500 or 600 members to over 1,000.

The Institute is undoubtedly doing a noble and inspiring work; a work worthy of the great traditions of Carrs Lane, and of the splendid enthusiasm by which it has been inspired. And yet when everything has been said and done, how impotent are even these agencies to touch the problem in its secret depths!

Of the deeper social needs of a district such as this it is impossible to speak without some misgiving. The institutional Church can only hope to touch the fringe of the problem; to ameliorate a few of the conditions; to add something of brightness and hope to the lives of these slum dwellers. It cannot grapple with the disease itself, which lies deeply rooted in a social system

Social Problems

which has created and will continue to create slum areas, so long as it is permitted to do so uncontrolled by wise regulation applied in the sacred name of human brotherhood.

The foundation problem is that of casual employment. By a process of natural selection, in which the artisan class in full employment is drawn away to the suburbs, these vast areas tend to become the home of the residuum of the social orders—the unfortunate, the ineffective, the physically unfit, the loafer, and that final class of social wreckage, the vicious and incapable.

The problem is aggravated by the existence of a large class which do not come within the cognizance of organized relief, but which, through illness or temporary unemployment, are on the verge of the social quagmire, and may be precipitated into it at any moment. In a large manufacturing centre, slight fluctuations in trade mean the employment or discharge of thousands of workers, whose wages give scant opportunities of providing for the rainy day. The laws of supply and demand operate with merciless severity. The ceaseless grind of competition ; the homicidal craze for cheapness, irrespective of labour values ; the introduction of labour saving and therefore

J. H. Jowett

labour displacing machinery, tend to throw more and more men into the casually employed class. From here it is a terribly easy descent to the paths of professional crime.

How to deal effectively with the several needs of each of these classes is the twentieth century's great challenge to a humanitarian civilization. No church or body of churches can here accomplish any final service. The challenge is to the nation, and upon her ability to meet it must at length rest her hope and her national security.

CHAPTER VII

THE CALL TO FIFTH AVENUE CHURCH, NEW YORK

IT only remains for us to refer in a brief closing chapter to Dr. Jowett's removal to America, to take up his work as the minister of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York. That the call should have been made was perhaps inevitable in view of the high position which he occupies among contemporary English preachers. That it should have been twice refused and twice repeated, reveals how urgent is the need of New York for a spiritual teacher of Dr. Jowett's type.

The invitation came in the first instance as a complete surprise. In the summer of 1909 Dr. Jowett paid a visit to America for the purpose of attending an important conference at Northfield, Massachusetts. During a six weeks tour he preached in a number of cities in the United States, including, of course, New York, where he occupied the Fifth Avenue pulpit upon two Sundays. He had

J. H. Jowett

no idea at the time that the Church desired him to become their minister. He arrived back in England in September, manifestly benefited by the change, and he spoke with enthusiasm of his impressions of the new Continent. He is a man intensely receptive of fresh ideas, with a discerning eye for the lessons to be drawn from a new and unfamiliar environment. There was much to appeal to him in the intense energy, the vast resources, and the rapidly-developing civilization of the new world. He told his own people at Digbeth Institute, that "his visit had given him an immensely bigger background. He should be less insular in his thinking. He had been moved into a new circle of ideas and interests. He thought he could promise they would find in his preaching more breadth, more comprehension, a greater sympathy with other peoples, more insight into their difficulties and, he hoped, more feeling and sensitiveness for the travail of the kingdom of God throughout the world."

Three months later he received a letter stating that a deputation was on its way to invite him to take charge of the Fifth Avenue Church. The news created a feeling of apprehension throughout the Free Churches lest he should accept the call. A couple of

Call to New York

anxious weeks followed, during which no decision was forthcoming. Resolutions and appeals poured in upon him from every part of the country, testifying to the value of his work, and urging him to remain in England. The Birmingham City Council took the unusual course of passing a resolution to the same effect. The result of these varied appeals was to convince Dr. Jowett that "whatever he was able to do was to be done in his native land."

At the conclusion of the annual University service Dr. Jowett announced his intention to decline the invitation. In a significant passage, he referred to

the outstanding importance of this Church in New York, the wide influence of its pulpit, and its almost boundless opportunities of service. I frankly say (he added) I know no Church on either side of the water which can compare with it in the possible range of life and labour. It is this vast opportunity for an evangelical ministry in America which has laid such a grip upon me and led to such uncertainty of decision.

In June, 1910, the call was repeated, but Dr. Jowett declined the invitation by cable within two hours of having received it.

It was not until he was approached for the third time in December, 1910, that he became assured of the "profound conviction that it was the will of God that he should go to Fifth Avenue Church."

J. H. Jowett

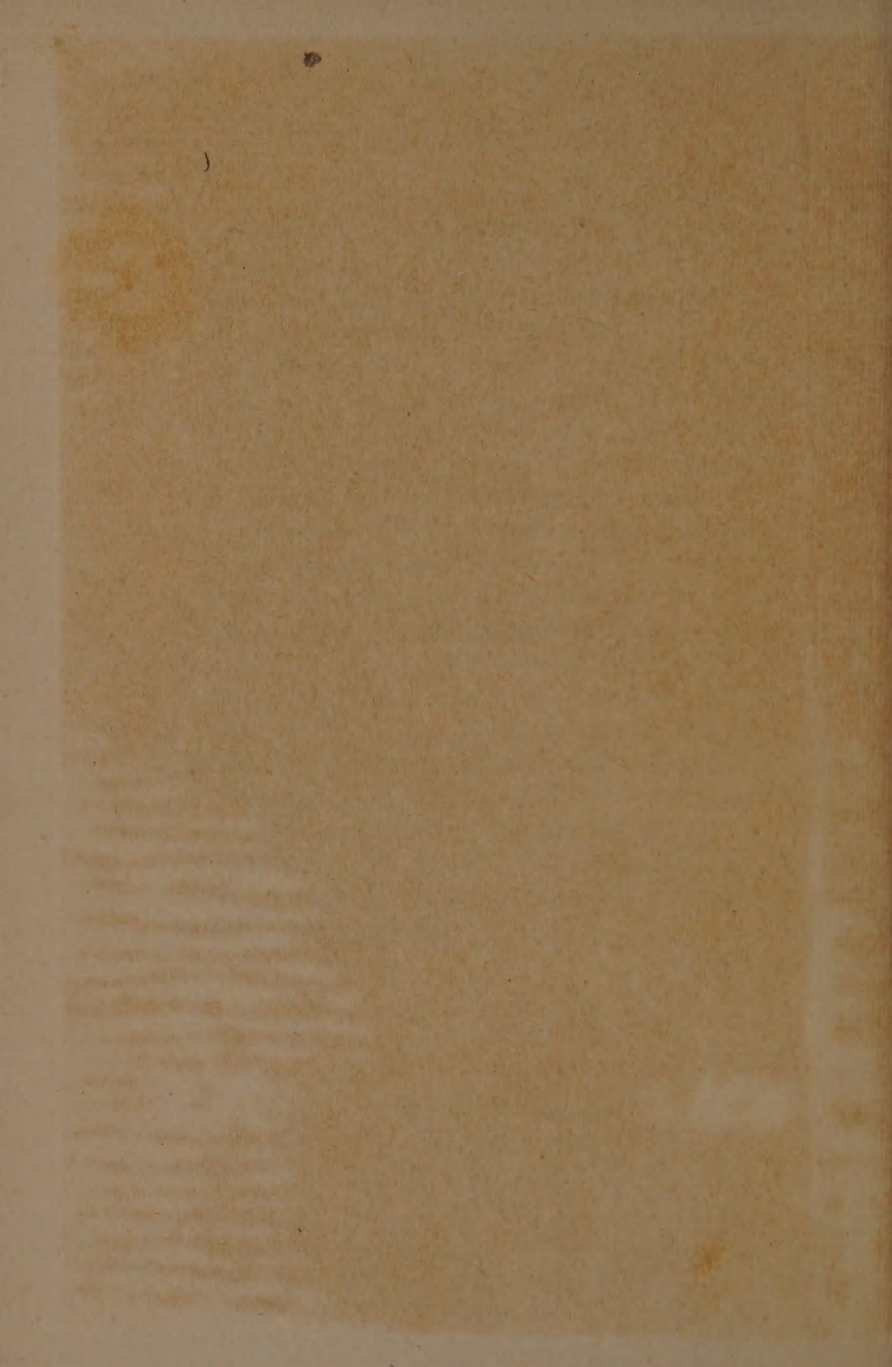
At a crowded meeting of his own people at Carrs Lane on Wednesday evening, January 25th, 1911; Dr. Jowett described how the renewed invitation found him, and he placed himself in their hands. The Church responded with an affectionately worded resolution, in which they also "recognized in the call the voice of God." They "commended him with all tenderness and Christian sympathy to their brethren across the sea."

Hardly could any words be more eloquent than these simple phrases, which, seeming to say so little, in reality conceal so much. The spirit is worthy alike of the man and the Church. Dr. Jowett will go to New York to a work, wider and more far reaching in its possibilities than anything which could be offered to him in this country. He will go with the good wishes of all who have come within the sphere of his influence, but with something closely akin to the affection of those who have had the good fortune to share his ministry.

School of Theology
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Ross, Albert Henry, 1881-
J.H. Jowett, M.A., D.D.; a character study,
by Frank Morison. Boston, Pilgrim Press,
1911.
63p. plates. 20cm.

1. Jowett, John Henry, 1864-1923.

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